



## **PHILIPPINES** by Vivien M. Talisayon and others

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### *Overview*

The basic educational system in the Philippines consists of six years of elementary education (primary- Grades 1-4, and intermediate - Grades 5-6) and four years of secondary education (first year to fourth year high school). The entry age at Grade 1 is 6 years old. The country has about 13 million students (NSCB, 2002) in elementary schools (93 percent in public schools, 7 percent in private schools) and about six million high school students (78 percent in public schools, 22 percent in private schools).

Major current issues in the Philippine educational system stem largely from inadequate resources nationwide. One issue is quality schooling and student achievement in large classes (40-100 students per class) due to lack of teacher items and classrooms, and shortage of instructional materials like textbooks. Another issue is the upgrading of the great mass of poorly qualified teachers, for example, non-majors teaching subjects like science and mathematics, leading to low (about 50 percent) student achievement.

## *The structure of schooling*

The Department of Education is the government agency tasked to supervise and regulate the elementary and high school system, both public and private. The Central Office which formulates educational policies has three bureaus: Bureau of Elementary Education, Bureau of Secondary Education, and Bureau of Non- Formal Education. The bureaus are headed by directors. The highest official in the Department is the Secretary assisted by Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries.

The Department has 17 regional offices headed by regional directors. Each region has divisions under the leadership of superintendents. Under each division are the schools headed by principals or school heads. The regional directors, superintendents and school heads are tasked to implement the policies of the Department. Each Regional Office is given a budget by the national government for salaries, maintenance and operating expenses, and for capital outlay.

The Division Superintendent is assisted by a Local School Board headed by the Governor of a province to plan education programs in the division and allocate local resources to implement such programs. The Division Office makes decisions on hiring teachers based on recommendations from the school principal and education supervisors.

The principal is the administrative and academic head of an elementary school or high school. In the primary grades (Grades 1-4), a teacher handles all subjects in one school day for one class at a grade level. At the intermediate grades (Grades 5-6), schools may adopt a departmental system, with teachers assigned to teach up to five classes in the same subject at the same grade level daily.<sup>2</sup>

Free tuition is provided in public schools for Grades 1-6. Private schools charge varying tuition rates. Some private elementary schools offer optional additional year after Grade 6 before the secondary level.

Tuition is free in public high schools, but attendance is not compulsory by law (PIER 2001). High schools are structured departmentally by subject areas. Teachers per subject area teach up to five classes daily. Standard class period is 40 minutes.

The Department of Education prescribes a national curriculum for elementary and high schools. Elementary education aims for functional literacy of students in communication arts in English and Filipino, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The objectives of secondary education are to continue to promote the objectives of elementary education and to develop in students the skills for productive endeavor and work, and to prepare them for formal higher education. Regional and

Division Offices are encouraged to have modifications and initiatives to make the curriculum more appropriate to regional or local conditions.

## *The legal framework*

The 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that the state shall allocate the highest budgetary allocation to education, protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Among the specific provisions in the Constitution (Article XIV) regarding education are:

1. Free public education at elementary and high school levels
2. Compulsory elementary education (Grades 1-6) for all children of school age (Age 6 and above)
3. State power over educational institutions
4. Relevance of educational system to the needs of people and society
5. Optional religious instruction in public elementary and high schools
6. English and Filipino as official languages in communication and instruction with regional languages as auxiliary media of instruction

The Education Act of 1982 provided for the establishment of an integrated system of education. The Act stipulated that the establishment of new schools or conversion of existing schools from elementary to national secondary schools or from secondary school to national secondary school shall be done through legislation. Private schools, except pre-schools are allowed to operate only if they convert into stock or non-stock corporations which include religious institutions.

Establishing a private school also requires the approval of the government through the Department of Education. The Act also established the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (renamed Department of Education in 2000), the government agency tasked to formulate general education objectives and policies, promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the administration, supervision and regulation of the education system, and provide for the establishment and maintenance of a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to national development goals.

The Act also encouraged the creation of public schools at the barangay level, or by municipal, city, province or regional governments. It also established the creation of local private school board in every municipality or city, whose main function was to manage and disburse the special private education fund to finance various school programs and projects.

Republic Act No. 6655 of 1988 established and provided for a free public secondary education. This law converts and integrates the administration, supervision and control of all public secondary schools, including the payment of teacher and school personnel salaries in the Department of Education.

Republic Act 7722 and Republic Act 7796, passed in 1994, transferred the supervision of higher education and trade schools from the Department of Education to the Commission on Higher Education and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, respectively.

### *Freedom to establish non-state schools*

The authority to grant a permit or recognition to open and operate private schools is the exclusive prerogative of the government as provided for in Section 4(1) of Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution. Republic Act 3075 empowered the Department of Education to supervise, inspect and regulate all elementary and secondary schools and prescribe the necessary rules governing their operations.

By requiring prospective schools to secure a permit before operating, the State ensures their compliance with at least the minimum standards set by the Manual of Regulations for Private Schools.<sup>2</sup>

Republic Act 7798 also provides that any private school to be established must incorporate as a non-stock or stock educational corporation in accordance with the provisions of the Corporation Code of the Philippines. Private schools established after September 1982 shall be owned solely by Filipino citizens, corporations, or associations at least sixty percent of the capital of which is owned by such citizens, except those allowed to be established by religious groups and mission boards, pursuant to the Constitution and special laws.<sup>3</sup>

## *Homeschooling*

### *Home study program*

Home Study Programs are implemented by interested divisions of the Department of Education in consonance with the 1987 Constitution (Article XV) which provides that quality education at all levels be made accessible to all Filipinos, and that non-formal and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning and out-of-school study programs, particularly those that respond to community needs be developed.

The Divisions of Quezon City and Rizal in the National Capital Region have home study programs. The objectives of the home study program in Quezon City are to:

- provide an affordable secondary education for all, and bring about an opportunity to enhance the quality of life of the citizenry;.

- give opportunity for sickly and working students to finish their secondary schooling; and

- help solve the school problem of shortage of teachers and classrooms.

Students in the program are issued the same textbooks in all subjects for the school year. They are given topics to study every week and required to answer questions given by teachers at the end of each topic. Contact sessions of students and teachers are on Saturdays. These sessions are for clarification of difficult topics encountered by students during the week.

The program in Quezon City addresses educational needs of working students such as factory workers, baby sitters, vendors, canteen helpers, janitors, laborers, sales ladies, sickly and street children who are willing to finish secondary education.

Admission requirements include at least 80 percent average rating in English, Mathematics, Science and Filipino at the elementary level, employment certificate if employed, and medical certificate if sickly.

The Local Government Code provides that local government units financially support home study programs. The officials participate in the operation of the program through the Local School Board.

The Home Study Program as implemented in some public schools is not in the organizational structure of the Department of Education. The public authority regulating the program is the Division superintendent through the school principal.

Regulation is in the form of management of resources appropriated for the program by the local government.

Parents of children admitted to the program understand that full authority on instruction, guidance and supervision is given to the teachers. Some educated parents may help in the preparation of homework. Majority of the parents are busy earning a living that education is really left to the teachers.

### *Accreditation and Equivalency Program*

This program was instituted in 1981 (Presidential Executive Order No. 733) to broaden opportunities of deprived, disadvantaged, under-served, deserving members of society, specifically out-of-school youth, and give due recognition and importance to learning acquired outside of the formal school system.

Target participants of the program are dropouts from elementary and secondary schools for at least one year, youth who never attended a formal school, and those presently employed and need to upgrade their academic level for re-entry into formal school, job entry or promotion, and self-fulfillment.

The principal instrument used is the Philippine Placement Test, a battery of tests for assessing basic learning skills and competencies covering the subject areas of communication arts (English and Filipino), mathematics, science, and social studies. Effectivity of the grade/year placement of the successful examinee is at the opening of the next school year.

### *School choice not limited by family income*

Parents' choice of the school, especially elementary school, is often influenced by its accessibility. A school may be selected because of its proximity to the family residence, or it may be along the way or near a parent's place of work. To illustrate, faculty and staff of a state university prefer to send their children to the laboratory grade school and high school of their university for proximity, as well as discounted fees and perceived quality of instruction.

School proximity is sometimes preferred by parents over quality of education. For instance, parents in rural areas opt to send their children to nearby multi- grade schools with two grade levels per classroom than to far mono-grade central schools.<sup>4</sup>

Other factors influencing parents' choice of a school are perceived quality of school instruction and the school where parents are alumni. A factor that may override school proximity is parents' preference for religious instruction in a private school. Parents' religion may be the deciding factor to send a child to a Catholic, Christian (Protestant) or Islam (madrasah) school. Madrasah schools are located in southern Philippines, in the island of Mindanao.

Parents' ethnicity is another factor, particularly for Chinese Filipinos. A few private schools have mostly Chinese Filipino students. Expatriates like the Japanese have put up private schools exclusively for their children.

Another consideration in parents' choice of schools at the secondary level is the child's inclination or talent. For the science-inclined, the country has science high schools, including the Philippine Science High School System and sixteen regional science high schools. The Philippine High School for the Arts is another special public school. Additional reasons for the choice of these schools are financial and non-financial benefits. The Philippine Science High School System offers full scholarship to its students, including dormitory expenses. Moreover, prestige is associated with the scholarship, and the quality of education results in a higher probability of acquiring a tertiary level scholarship and admission to a quality university.

Parents may decide on a vocational/technical school for their children for earlier livelihood prospects, in addition to the students' vocational/technical interests. Finally, parents whose children have learning disabilities usually have no choice but to send their children to special education schools or centers.

### *School distinctiveness protected by law*

The right to school distinctiveness is expressed in Section 2 of Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Section 2 encourages "non-formal, informal, and indigenous learning systems, as well as self-learning, independent, and out-of-school youth study programs, particularly those that respond to community needs".

In the same article, Section 5 affirms, too, the right to school distinctiveness, to wit: "The State shall take into account regional and sectoral needs and conditions and shall encourage local planning in the development of educational policies and programs.

Section 5 also provides "adult citizens, the disabled, and out-of-school youth with training in civics, vocational efficiency and other skills".

Section 10 (Science and Technology) and Section 14 (Arts and Culture) are



implemented in the establishment of regional and national science high schools, and a national high school for the arts, respectively.

### *Distinctive character of schools*

The distinctive character of a school depends on a number of conditions, such as: purpose for which it was established, entity or institution managing/ operating the school, location of the school, kind of pupils and teachers, quality of its facilities, school curriculum, and admission policy. The distinctiveness of a school is expressed in its vision-mission and, in the case of public high schools, in the law or Republic Act that established the school.

Regular public schools, elementary or secondary schools, have the same free admission policy and the intended curriculum provided by the Department of Education.. However, their distinctiveness lies in the quality of implemented curriculum (what is taught) and achieved curriculum (what is learned), depending on their location and access to educational resources, quality of teachers and educational administration, and community support. These schools are under the supervision of the Department.

Other public schools like laboratory schools of state universities and colleges, and some vocational/technical schools differ from regular schools in terms of purpose and institution managing them. The laboratory school, run by a state college/university, tries out educational innovations of the institution, has its own curriculum, and serves as a school mainly for the faculty and staff. The state colleges and universities are under the supervision of the Commission on Higher Education.

Public vocational schools are administered by the Department of Education (DepEd). Some technical schools are privately-administered. Their curriculum is the prescribed Basic Education Curriculum with some vocational/technical applications.

Public science high schools have a science-oriented curriculum, distinct from the curriculum of regular public high schools. Furthermore, the Philippine Science High School System is under the Department of Science and Technology and not governed by DepEd policies. The regional science high schools, other public science high schools, and the Philippine High School for the Arts (for the gifted in the arts), are all supervised by DepEd.

Private elementary and high schools are required to have as a minimum/core curriculum the Basic Education Curriculum prescribed by DepEd. Various kinds of entities/institutions establish and operate private schools, resulting in different vision-mission, curriculum orientation (e.g., religious or secular), and admission policies (e.g.,



exclusively for girls or boys). The quality of teachers and facilities often reflects the thrusts and financial capability of the schools.

## *Decisions about admitting pupils*

Article XIV, Section 6 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states that admission to any private school is open to all students who meet its specific standards, requirements and regulations as indicated in printed materials. Similarly, the public school system is open to all students who meet set standards.

Although elementary education is compulsory, children seeking admission to a public school have to meet its standards (e.g., minimum entry age of 6 years old for an elementary school). Private schools can have additional admission criteria like passing an entrance examination. Regular public schools have no entrance examination. Moreover, private schools have fees determined by their board of trustees or management.<sup>5</sup>

A student's failure to satisfy academic standards of a school is a legal ground for the school refusing re-admission of the student. Violation of school rules is another ground for denying a student's re-admission.

## *Decisions about staff*

Hiring, deployment, development and promotion of public school teachers are covered by guidelines of the Department of Education. Regional Offices of the Department oversee the recruitment, selection and appointment of public school teachers to ensure that the most qualified applicants are hired, pursuant to the guidelines. The Division offices in each region and the school heads implement the guidelines.

Applicants without teaching experience are ranked according to: Licensure Examination for Teachers (30 percent), interview (30 percent), education (30 percent), and work experience (10 percent). For applicants with teaching experience: Licensure Examination for Teachers (30 percent), teaching experience (30 percent), interview (30 percent), and education (10 percent).

In giving teacher assignments in public elementary or secondary schools, priority is given to bona fide residents of a community where the school is located, provided the

teacher meets the minimum qualification for the position (Republic Act No. 8190). Promotion of teaching and non-teaching staff in public schools is governed by rules and guidelines of the Civil Service Commission. Conditions of employment of non-teaching staff are also in accord with labor laws and regulations.

Private schools need to observe labor laws and regulations for the employment conditions of their teachers and non-teaching staff. However, school management, in consultation with its board of trustees, has greater flexibility in hiring, deployment, promotion and development of teachers and other staff.

In selecting teachers, public schools require formal qualifications, a bachelor's degree in education for high school teaching and a bachelor's degree in elementary education for elementary school teaching. Applicants should have passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers.

In addition to these qualifications, private faith-based schools require applicants to sign a contract which states that they will abide by the philosophy and religious practices of the school. Applicants of a similar religious affiliation/persuasion are given preference.

A study of the Department of Education on Teacher Effectiveness (TEEP, 2002b) proposed a teacher appraisal system that is guided by meritocracy, integrity, and transparency. The appraisal system for teacher selection, promotion, deployment and development includes objective criteria, tried out instruments, systematic procedures, and committees (instead of only one education official) involved in appraisal and decision-making. The appraisal system covers four stages of professional development that emerged from the data, namely: beginning teacher stage, experienced teacher stage, expert teacher stage, and near-retirement stage.

### *Accountability for school quality*

Compliance with the law, continuous assessment of quality of education provided, and working towards improvement of teaching practice are among the measures implemented by the Department of Education to ensure school quality.

The curriculum for elementary and secondary levels is formulated by the Bureau of Elementary Education and Bureau of Secondary Education through a consultative process with stakeholders and experts. Teachers use the curriculum guide in planning and implementing daily lesson plans. The Regional Supervisor for each discipline and

the Division Supervisor oversee the proper implementation of the intended curriculum. School principals or heads check lesson plans of teachers.

Private schools may modify or enrich the national curriculum based on their school's philosophy and vision-mission. A well-articulated curricular program is one requirement of the Department of Education in granting permits to private schools to operate.

The Department likewise regulates use of instructional materials, especially textbooks. A textbook committee examines the textbooks for general readability, accuracy and relevance of content, and appropriateness of strategies. The Department approves textbooks and other materials used in public schools and oversees distribution of selected textbooks for nationwide use. Private schools, on the other hand, are given the option to choose their textbooks and other instructional materials.

The Department has a training arm, the National Educators Academy of the Philippines, that conducts or supervises national in-service training for elementary and secondary school teachers. In addition, each region, division or school, at the initiative of its head, conducts training programs for teachers based on training needs assessment.

Evaluation of students is done periodically to determine if students meet the requirements for the grade or year level. Students who pass 75 percent of the requirements, as indicated by formal and informal measures, are promoted to the next grade or year level. Those who fall short of the passing level are retained. Students who complete the requirements of the 6-year elementary education receive a certificate and move on to the secondary level. Similarly, students who meet the requirements of the four-year secondary education receive a certificate and can move on to tertiary level.

National achievement tests had been administered for several years to Grade 6 and Grade 10 students. Recently, achievement tests were given to Grades 4 and 7, partly due to international tests in science and mathematics given at those grade levels in the country.

An overall school quality process is school accreditation. Private elementary and high schools apply for accreditation by the Philippine Association for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges and Universities. The Department of Education has piloted a similar process for the public elementary and secondary schools.

An incentive system tested for high-performing public elementary and secondary public schools (TEEP, 2002c) has the following basic components: (1) vision-mission/school culture, (2) supervision and administration, (3) curriculum and instruction, (4) school facilities, (5) school and community partnership, (6) teacher performance, and (7) learner outcomes. As in the private school accreditation process, the piloted system has three levels, with Level 3 as the highest level that is valid for five years. One recommendation is the implementation of the incentive system by an independent body composed of education officials from public and private sectors.

### *Teaching of values*

The teaching of values in the public school system had been for decades mainly in the subject, Good Manners and Right Conduct, now generally called Values Education. In private schools, the subject is Christian Living, which integrates religious beliefs for sectarian schools.

The values education curriculum for public high schools (Grades 7-10) in the nineties focused on the self, others, country and God. Student performance, using a multiple-choice values self-inventory based on real-life dilemma situations, increased significantly from Grade 7 to Grade 10.<sup>6</sup> Average performance of high school students in the inventory was significantly higher than that of a college sample, with the college student mean scores declining from lower to upper years.

In the current school curriculum, the teaching of values is embedded in the subject, *Makabayan*, where values are integrated in areas such as social studies, art education, music and physical education. Values integration is also encouraged in other subjects, namely, Science, Mathematics, English and Filipino, wherever appropriate.

## *Endnotes*

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<sup>2</sup> Sarmiento, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> CBSI, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> TEEP, 2002a.

<sup>5</sup> Sarmiento, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO Philippines, 1997.

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